

250 COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S
HISTORY

from the proceedings of criminal courts ; we
have only to
do with the contemplation of the historical
event/¹

Throughout he strives to preserve this
philosophical attitude, unmoved by the passions of
contemporaries, but
seeking to understand and explain them.
Sometimes

Ranke dismisses an episode with surprising
brevity; the
reason often seems to be that the particular
episode had
been adequately treated by Macaulay and
that he had
little to add. At other times he narrates an
event or series
of events in considerable detail because he
has much to
add.

The difference between Macaulay's and
Ranke's general
view is more important than any difference in
their judge-
ments of particular men or their accounts of
particular inci-
dents. In the prefaces which stand before the
various books
into which Ranke divides his History, his point
of view is
stated and emphasised. To him the reign of
James II is
not so much an episode in the history of
England as a
chapter in the history of Europe. Two
questions, he says in
the introduction to the seventeenth book, had
to be deter-
mined in that reign : the relation of the
monarchy and the
people of England, and the relation between
England and
France. Louis XIV was aiming at universal
monarchy,
and the independence of the states of Europe
could not be

maintained any longer, unless Louis found
somewhere or
other an energetic resistance. ^c To offer such
resistance
seemed the natural vocation of England.... But
if it was to
fulfil this task, it must not again be crippled by
internal dis-
orders/ All depended on the question whether
a Catholic
king and a Protestant nation could work
together. If
they could, a vigorous foreign policy was
possible. If they
could not, religious and political dissensions
would render a

¹ iv. 364.